A NOTE ON *CIRIS* 118*

ABSTRACT

This note offers a new emendation in the Ciris. *The author suggests that the text of line 118 should read:* deicere et indomita Minoa retundere mente.

Keywords: *Ciris*; textual criticism; emendation

sed neque tum ciues neque tum rex ipse ueretur
infesto ad muros uolitantis agmine turmas
deicere et indomitas uirtute retundere mentes, 118
responsum quoniam satis est meminisse deorum.

118 deicere *Vollmer*: dicere *Z*, reicere *Heinsius*, ducere ρ, ducentem [*sc. Minoem*] *Sillig* | indomita ρ *Sillig*

Most scholars accept Vollmer's conjecture[1] *deicere* in line 118 and understand the passage about the siege of Megara as follows: neither the citizens [*sc*. of Megara] nor the king [*sc*. Nisus] himself fears to strike down the [Cretan] squadrons that flock in hostile band to the walls and valorously to blunt the unconquered spirit [*sc*. of the foe], since it is enough to remember the answer of the gods [according to which Nisus' country and kingdom will be secure as long as his purple lock is preserved].[2] Lyne—though he accepts this interpretation in his edition of, and commentary on, the *Ciris*—raises a reasonable doubt regarding the expression *uirtute retundere mentes*, which is, in his opinion, 'a bold and striking expression in the context'.[3] Indeed, it may seem awkward that the object of *retundere* is *mentes* and, moreover, that it is *mentes indomitae*: we would rather expect, in fact, that the adjective *indomitus* should refer to the unconquered Megarians rather than to the Cretan aggressor. The line, therefore, needs further emendation, and in order to correct it we should answer the following question: *what* or *who* is being repelled by both the citizens and the king of Megara?

The first scholar who seems to have correctly understood the object of *retundere* was Sillig. He conjectured: *sed neque ueretur* […] *turmas ducentem indomita uirtute retundere mentis*, and added the following explanation: 'Ut ducentem intelligas Minoem', thus

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[1] The uncertain dating of the *Ciris* is an obvious obstacle to a textual critic. In this regard, I am inclined to follow von Albrecht's view: the poem (which cannot be ascribed to Virgil) is written in the neoteric manner and a late, post-Virgilian, date can be supported only if we postulate 'either the backwardness of some poetic dilettante or the duplicity of an accomplished forger': M. von Albrecht, *History of Roman Literature. From Livius Andronicus to Boethius with Special Regard to its Influence on World Literature*, 2 vols. (Leiden / New York / Cologne, 1997), 1.708 and n. 1. For the bibliography on the *Cirisfrage*, see von Albrecht (this note) and B. Kayachev, *Allusion and Allegory: Studies in the 'Ciris'* (Berlin and Boston, 2016), 1 n. 3.

[2] I am using the translation of H. Rushton Fairclough, *Virgil*, *Aeneid VII–XII*; *Appendix Vergiliana* (Cambridge, MA, 1918), 451–2 with slight modifications.

[3] R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Ciris: A Poem Attributed to Virgil* (Cambridge, 1978), 150. Ter. *Haut.* 945–6 (*ut eius animum, qui nunc luxuria et lasciuia | diffluit, retundam*), adduced by Lyne, is only seemingly a parallel since it is about suppressing bad qualities rather than about overcoming good ones.

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suggesting that it is the king of Crete who is repelled by the Megarians.[4] Sillig's emendation, however, has one shortcoming, namely, that the genitive *mentis* is superfluous (*indomita uirtute* stands well alone and does not need *mentis*) and is located at the end of the verse where something important is usually found. Another emendation pointing to Minos as the object of *retundere* has recently been published by Kayachev; yet his proposal—*sed neque ueretur* […] *turmas reicere et indomita uirtute retundere Minon*—is based on the form *Minon*, which is only attested in Greek; moreover, the author of the *Ciris* twice uses the accusative form *Minoa* (in lines 132 and 367), and the corruption of *Minon* into *mentes* is rather unlikely from a palaeographical point of view.[5]

In my opinion, there is a better solution to the problems arising in the passage discussed here. Thus I suggest the following emended text of line 118:

> sed neque tum ciues neque tum rex ipse ueretur
> infesto ad muros uolitantis agmine turmas
> deicere et *indomita Minoa* retundere *mente*

the meaning of which would be: 'neither the citizens nor the king himself fears to strike down the squadrons that flock in hostile band to the walls and to fend off Minos with their unconquered spirit'. This solution not only introduces the desired object of *retundere* but also provides the perfectly understandable expression *indomita mente*, to which close analogies in Latin are quoted by Lyne (*animus indomitus*: Plaut. *Bacch*. 612, Livy 38.9.1, Tac. *Ann*. 1.33.5; *ingenia indomita*: Livy 21.20.8, 38.12.4, 38.48.12; *pectore indomito*: Stat. *Theb*. 11.714).[6]

Finally, the reading as suggested above does not assume a process of corruption that would be impossible or difficult to explain: in the first stage *uirtute* replaced *Minoa* as a gloss on *indomita mente*, and afterwards the lack of the object of *retundere* brought about the transformation of *indomita mente* into the accusative *indomitas mentes*. In support of my conjecture it may also be observed that the accusative *Minoa* is found in the same position within the line in *Ciris* 132 *o nimium cupidis Minoa inhiasset ocellis* and 367 *essent qui generum Minoa auctoribus extis*.[7]

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[4] I. Sillig, *Publii Virgilii Maronis quae vulgo feruntur carmina Culex Ciris Copa Moretum. Recensuit et Heynii suasque observationes addidit Iulius Sillig* (Leipzig, 1832), 223.

[5] B. Kayachev, '*Ciris* 118', *Eos* 105 (2018), 123–6, at 125–6.

[6] Lyne (n. 3), 150. To these parallels one can also add: Plaut. *Cas*. 252 *domuisti animum* and Hor. *Carm*. 2.2.9 *latius regnes auidum domando spiritum*. It is worth noting that Lucan uses the terms *mens* and *indomitus* close together and in a similar context at 3.303–5 *tamen ante furorem | indomitum duramque uiri deflectere mentem | pacifico sermone parant*: the citizens of Massilia try to turn aside (*deflectere*) the untameable rage (*furorem indomitum*) and the stern heart (*duram mentem*) of Caesar who is about to attack their city, similarly to the Megarians who are certain that they can repel the assault by Minos. Finally, it is perhaps not accidental that the author of the *Ciris* himself uses the verb *domitare* in line 135 when referring to Cupid's ability to tame wild animals: the Megarians remain with an 'unconquered spirit' towards Minos' aggression, but the daughter of their king, Scylla, will be 'subdued' by the god of love.

[7] In line 132, *Minoa* was restored by Lachmann (the manuscripts read *si non*). Why this conjecture should be accepted is explained by Lyne (n. 3), 156.

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